

Questions and Answers:
English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA)
Teleconference on March 2, 2006

1. Is the test delivery date estimate still March 16-18?

The ELPA contractor, Harcourt Assessment, Inc. (Harcourt), is starting to fill orders for ELPA assessment booklets and answer documents. The *Directions for Administration* and accommodated materials will be sent to schools and districts in separate packages a few days later. All schools and districts are scheduled to receive their ELPA materials no later than March 21. If, upon opening boxes of ELPA materials, you determine that additional materials are needed, you should call the Harcourt Customer Support: 1-800-763-2306 or e-mail csc@harcourt.com.

2. Can test materials for training purposes be given out prior to the March 13-15 shipments?

We have a sample of the non-secure sections of a *Directions for Administration* document for Grades 3-5 that is available for training. The front section of the sample is representative of all ELPA levels: K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. The last section shows speaking rubric samples for form 4 of grades 3-5 and information for returning documents. The four major Speaking rubrics (Repeat/Read Aloud, Sentence Completion, Storytelling and Social Interaction) are contained in all ELPA levels. Directions for returning ELPA documents are also the same for all levels.

There are also samples of the major Speaking rubrics and a scoring section for Repeat/Read Aloud, Sentence Completion, Storytelling and Social Interaction. These samples are available on the OEAA website at www.michigan.gov/oeaa.

3. Can you now order additional tests on the website? We were told by OEAA to contact Harcourt directly.

We ask that you contact Harcourt Customer Support at 1-800-763-2306 to place additional orders until March 17, when a link to Harcourt Spectrum will be made available on the OEAA secure website.

4. Is the Speaking rubric and form available for training?

There are four main Speaking rubrics that are common to all ELPA levels: Repeat/Read Aloud, Sentence Completion, Storytelling and Social Interaction. A sample rubric and scoring form for these four types of rubrics are located on the OEAA website at www.michigan.gov/oeaa.

5. On the Speaking-scoring rubric, back side with student information -- Do we have to fill in all of the information on the page? Or can we enter it on the website?

The district assessment administrator can update most all of the student demographic information as part of the tested roster process. The student name section, assessment date, equipment used for directions, and accommodations sections are generally filled in at the assessment site. Please follow specific directions provided by your local ELPA coordinator for bubbling in information on the demographic page, which is located on the back covers of ELPA scannable answer documents.

6. Can we see the rubrics somewhere on the web, or must we wait for the manuals?

A sample rubric for training purposes has been posted on the OEAA website at www.michigan.gov/oeaa. Please refer to question 4 for additional information regarding these rubrics.

7. Are they going to assign passwords for every user ID or just the Administrator ID's

Passwords for ELPA are assigned to all users with administration and modification rights for the OEAA secure website.

8. Are there going to be more training videos/DVDs available to insure that everyone can appropriately score the speaking portion of the test?

There are a limited number of DVDs that provide Speaking samples for training. Please call OEAA at 1-877-560-8378 to ensure DVD availability for the date of your district's ELPA training session.

9. If we access the archived stream, will it include the video clips on scoring the Speaking portion of the test?

Yes.

10. We are expected to test students whose parents have refused services. How do we justify pulling a student out of class for more than 2 ½ hours when the parent has already stated that they do not want their child to be pulled out?

While parents have the option of selecting the instructional program placement for their child, the State is obligated, under federal law, to assess those students who are eligible for services to determine the progress toward acquiring English skills that are essential for success in academic courses.

11. What should we do if a student is eligible for ELL services (below proficient) but a parent has refused services? Suggestions for telling the parent the student needs to be tested?

Schools and districts formulate the policies used to inform parents about the assessment of students. In general, the purpose of ELPA is to determine a student's progress in acquiring English skills. This federally mandated assessment annually informs parents about the gains in learning English that their student has achieved based on the current decisions regarding instructional placement.

12. Can we test groups of students at different times or do we have to test them all at the same time?

Groups of students may be tested at different times within the assessment window. The Listening, Reading, and Writing sections of the ELPA may be administered in group settings. The Speaking section is to be individually administered. The group-administered sections may be given to groups of a manageable size where (1) all students can clearly hear the read-aloud or CD/audiotape-read directions for the ELPA, (2) any questions that students may have about the directions can be clearly heard and addressed, and (3) the staff of assessment administrators and proctors present is sufficient to monitor all of the students in the group being assessed. In some schools or districts this will require more than one group per grade span being assessed.

13. The test window is only 14 school days if the district is closed on Good Friday and the week after Easter. Is there any extension if we cannot complete the testing in this window?

Schools and districts may begin administering the ELPA as soon as materials arrive in buildings, which is expected to occur a week or ten days prior to the administration window.

14. Will the ELPA replace the Woodcock-Munoz test?

The ELPA will be used as the official State of Michigan assessment for Title III annual reporting purposes. The Woodcock-Munoz and other English language proficiency assessments may continue to be used by schools and districts for diagnostic and placement purposes.

15. If a student scores higher on the ELPA than on the Woodcock-Munoz test, will this not qualify him/her for the program?

No. Placement and exit decisions for Title III programs are based on a number of factors—just one of which is the English language proficiency score.

16. Will we be testing students that are in special education and are also receiving services from bilingual?

Yes. All students who are eligible for Title III services—whether or not they are currently receiving those services—need to be assessed. This includes students with disabilities and Section 504 students.

17. I have several students who are learning disabled or cognitively impaired who are also English language learners. Doesn't this affect the validity of the test? How should I handle this situation?

For these students, accommodations that are customarily used during classroom activities may be considered for use during the administration of the ELPA. These accommodations are designed to assist students with disabilities in taking ELPA. The OEAA has provided an updated Assessment Accommodations Summary Table that includes accommodations for ELPA. It can be found in the *Directions for*

Administration and the *ELPA Coordinator Manual for Districts and Schools*, as well as on the OEAA website. The table identifies standard and nonstandard accommodations used in administering the ELPA to students with disabilities or to Section 504 students.

The use of an accommodation is based on documentation within the student's record and is decided on a student-by-student basis. Wherever possible, please use standard accommodations which do not change the construct that the assessment is measuring and do provide a valid score. (Nonstandard accommodations do change the construct that the assessment is measuring and therefore render scores invalid.)

18. What score will indicate that the student should no longer be considered for receiving bilingual services?

Receiving a score of "proficient" on the ELPA is one indicator that an English language learner (ELL) may be ready to exit a program or service. A school or district may also include other criteria in making these final determinations.

19. Is the ELPA Reading Test only in 2 sections for K-2, or can other grade levels be divided as well?

The Reading section for K-2 is divided in two parts, A and B, to accommodate younger students. The Reading sections for the remaining grade levels contain one part and should be administered as a single session.

20. Because test increases in complexity, can we let students stop when it becomes too difficult?

In general, each section of the ELPA increases in the length of passages or complexity. However, the items are arranged by type of item, or format, and there are several formats for each section. Hence, there are some easier items toward the end of ELPA sections. It is important to encourage students to try to answer all of the items; this will help us determine a student's strengths or weaknesses with English language proficiency standards.

21. Please list resources that can be used to help prep students to test in their native language.

The purpose of ELPA is to assess a student's progress in learning English skills; the ELPA is given only in English.

22. Is it true that a student can use both languages as long as the language structure is correct – for partial score?

The ELPA is an assessment of English. If a student responds to a speaking prompt only in another language, no points are earned. If a student responds partially in English and another language, points are assigned based on the quality of the English portion only.

23. Can a test (Speaking) be discontinued after a certain number of consecutive errors?

No. The items are intended to cover a broad variety of English skills and there are several formats of questions in each section. Please encourage students to attempt all of the items in a section.

24. In the social interaction, how do you score if they respond with a question?

Responding with a question is fine. Full credit is given, depending on the appropriateness of the response given.

25. On the Repeat/Read Aloud section of the Speaking test, can you repeat a prompt for a student if he or she asks to hear it again?

The administration specifies what is read to the student. The prompt is read once. Note: A sample is provided for each type of prompt in the ELPA. While the sample is given, the staff giving the assessment can check for understanding and can remind student that the prompts will be read only one time so they should listen very carefully.

26. Is the open-ended part of the test section scored holistically? Who is scoring it?

Yes. The open-ended parts of the ELPA (some questions in the Writing section and all of the questions in the Speaking section) are scored holistically. Harcourt, the ELPA scoring contractor, will score the answers to the open-ended questions in the Writing section. Responses to questions in the Speaking section are scored by the staff member who administers this section to the student.

27. Is it okay to have another student help translate directions?

The purpose of this assessment is to document how well the student can use the English language. Therefore, it is not acceptable for another student to translate any directions to a student in a native language or to help in any other way that adversely affects the standardization of ELPA.

28. Would you please let us know who can be an ELPA proctor? It is important for us to know before we receive our manual to make sure that they receive the proper training.

An Assessment Proctor can be a teacher's aide, paraprofessional, or other paid district or school personnel. If volunteers must be used, they should be trained with appropriate testing procedures. Family of students in the assessment group should not be used as proctors. Refer to Appendix B in the *ELPA Directions for Administration*.

29. Can we have a bilingual instructional assistant whose first language is English, but is also bilingual?

You can use staff that meets the qualifications for an assessment administrator or assessment proctor. For more information, please refer to the previous answer.

30. Do all sections of the Speaking test use rubrics with a 0-2 point range, or are there various score point ranges? Please clarify.

Score point ranges vary among questions in the Speaking section. Some questions have a score point range of 0-2. Other score point ranges are 0-1 and 0-4.

31. Since the score for the Speaking part is interpreted by what the teacher hears, how then do you account for the fact that some teachers speak English as their second language and/or speak with different regional accents and may hear different sounds or even make incorrect pronunciations themselves? This part of the assessment seems too subjective!

The scoring for the Speaking section should be consistent among people and groups who are administering this section throughout the state. Schools and districts will need to use their own judgment in deciding who will score the Speaking section to best ensure overall consistency.

Different districts have different ways of achieving consistency with the Speaking section. One district, for example, plans to use an audiotape to record the first few students who take the Speaking section. After administration, a group of staff who plan to administer and score the Speaking section will meet as a group and listen to the recorded sessions and consider—first as an individual and then as a group—the scores to be assigned to each student. Through discussion, the staff will reach inter-rater consistency by determining whether all those present would have assigned the same score to each student’s answer. Once consistency is achieved, staff will score the Speaking section as it is given to the student.

This is just one of many ways that schools and districts have chosen to address the issue of consistent score. All staff chosen to administer and score the Speaking section should be familiarized with the rubrics prior to scoring.

32. Reporting must include Comprehension in addition to Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. ELPA features four sections that do not include “Comprehension?”

Questions from the Listening and Reading sections of ELPA are used to report the Comprehension score.

33. Once a student tests proficient, do they have to take ELPA again the next year?

At this time, testing of the student would be optional if the student is no longer eligible for services. Usually, eligibility is based on a number of criteria in addition to a proficient score on an English language proficiency assessment.

34. If testing FLEPs is optional, and you choose not to test them, should their names be entered on the website?

No, there is no need for the names to be entered on the website if there is no plan to assess the student. At this time, the assessment of Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP) students is optional in most all cases. The single exception involves students who were counted as ELLs in fall 2005 and have since been exited. These FLEPs must be assessed this spring with ELPA.

35. When will this test be done as a computer-based test vs. a paper booklet test?

We are looking at the feasibility of piloting a computer-based version of an ELPA screening instrument that could be administered to students at the time of enrollment.

The challenge with converting the annual spring administration of ELPA to a computer-based assessment involves the ability of schools and districts to provide sufficient numbers of computers to enable the completion of assessment for all ELLs during a single 4- to 5-week assessment cycle.